

## بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

### **The Obligation of Following the Salaf, and the Prohibition and Danger of Following Other than Them**

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The Questioner asked: Is it lawful for a person to adopt the way of the Salaf (pious predecessors) - which is the method of the Prophet (*salallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) and his companions - and call himself a "Salafee?"

Shaikh Saalim at-Taweel (*hafidhahullaah*) answered:

I have been asked this question so many times. However, tonight we wish to pose the question in a different manner. [The questioner asked,] "Is it lawful for a Muslim to take the methodology of the Salaf? Thus, if we said, **"Is it lawful for a Muslim to take a method other than the method of the Salaf?"** And that is because the origin is that the Muslim should take the methodology of the Salaf who preceded him - the Messenger (*salallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) and his companions.

If a person said, "Is it lawful for a Muslim to follow the Messenger of Allaah (*salallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) and his companions," **this would be a very strange question.**

**Rather it is obligatory to follow the Messenger of Allaah (*salallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) and his companions.** Why did Allaah send His Messenger (*salallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*)? In order that he (*salallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) be obeyed - **bi idhnillaah** (by Allaah's Permission). And that he (*salallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) be followed. And Allaah has commanded us to follow him.

Allaah, The Exalted, says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ

***“O you who believe! Obey Allaah, and obey the Messenger (Muhammad, salallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam)...” (Muhammad, ayah 33)***

مَنْ يُطِيعِ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللَّهَ

***“He who obeys the Messenger (Muhammad, salallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam), has indeed obeyed Allah...” (An-Nisa, ayah 80)***

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

***“Say (O Muhammad, salallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, to mankind): “If you (really) love Allaah then follow me, Allaah will love you and forgive you of your sins. And Allaah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.” (Aali 'Imran, ayah 31)***

Therefore, following the Prophet (salallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam) is obligatory. It is obligatory on each and every Muslim to follow the Messenger of Allaah. Follow him in what? (Follow him) in his 'aqeedah (beliefs, creed), in his manhaj (methodology), in his acts of 'ibadah (worship), in his character and etiquette and behavior (and dealings). He should follow the Messenger (salallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam) - in everything.

Allaah says:

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُو اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ  
وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا

***“Indeed in the Messenger of Allaah (Muhammad, salallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam), you have a good example to follow for him who hopes in (the Meeting with) Allaah and the Last Day and remembers Allaah much.” (Al-Ahzab, ayah 21)***

Allaah made him (salallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam) exempt and protected from mistakes, and suitable to be followed in each and every thing. Therefore, it is obligatory upon us to follow him (salallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam), and to follow his companions, and imitate their way. And this is something Allaah has commanded us with, and threatened the one who does not follow the companions (radiallaahu 'anhum ajma'een).

In the statement of Allaah, The Exalted:

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ آمِنُوا كَمَا آمَنَ النَّاسُ

***“And when it is said to them (hypocrites): "Believe as the people (companions of Muhammad - Al-Ansar and Al-Muhajiroon) have believed"... (Al-Baqarah 2:13)***

There were no believers in the time of the Messenger of Allaah (salallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam) except the sahaabah.

Allaah, The Exalted, also says:

فَإِنْ آمَنُوا بِمِثْلِ مَا آمَنْتُمْ بِهِ فَقَدْ اهْتَدَوْا وَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا هُمْ فِي شِقَاقٍ فَسَيَكْفِيكَهُمُ اللَّهُ  
وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

***“So if they believe in the like of that which you believe, then they are rightly guided, but if they turn away, then they are only in opposition. So Allaah will suffice you against them. And He is the All-Hearer, the All-Knower.” (Al-Baqarah, ayah 137)***

Speaking to who? The sahaabah, because when the Qur`an was sent down, there were no other Muslims besides the sahaabah.

Allaah, The Exalted says:

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ

***“You [true believers in Tawheed, real followers of Prophet Muhammad and his Sunnah] are the best of peoples ever raised up for mankind...” (Aali 'Imran, ayah 110)***

Who is - كُنْتُمْ - (You are)? The nation of Muhammad (salallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam). And who were the original seeds from which [this] Muslim nation came? The sahaabah (radiallaahu 'anhum ajma'een).

And Allaah ('Azza wa Jall), has also threatened those who follow the path and method other than the path of the sahaabah.

Allaah, The Exalted, says:

وَمَنْ يُشَاقِقِ الرَّسُولَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ الْهُدَىٰ وَيَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ سَبِيلِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ نُوَلِّهِ مَا تَوَلَّىٰ  
وَنُصْلِهِ جَهَنَّمَ ۖ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا

***“And whoever contradicts and opposes the Messenger (Muhammad) after the right path has been shown clearly to him, and follows other than the believers' way. We shall keep him in the path he has chosen, and burn him in Hell - what an evil destination.” (An-Nisa, ayah 115)***

(And whoever contradicts and opposes the Messenger) ---> Meaning the Messenger is saying one thing and you are here saying something else.

If a person said, "I wish to hold fast to the Book and the Sunnah even if I don't hold fast to that which the companions of the Prophet were upon. Isn't it sufficient -the

Book and the Sunnah- why do you require me to be upon that which the companions were upon?"

(Well), because in the Book and the Sunnah, we have been commanded to follow the sahaabah. If we really wanted to adhere to the Book and the Sunnah - **truly** - then in the Book and the Sunnah, we have been commanded to follow and take the example of the companions.

The Prophet (*salallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) said: ***Alaykum bi Sunnati*** (hold fast to my **Sunnah**). He didn't say that and keep silent. Rather, he (*salallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) said: ***Alaykum bi Sunnati wa Sunnah al-Khulafa ar-Rashideen al-Mahdiyeen min ba'dee*** (hold fast to my Sunnah and the Sunnah of the rightly-guided caliphs after me).

Therefore, he (*salallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) commanded for the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allaah [and the sahaabah] to be followed and held fast to. He (*salallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) said, "**Hold fast to it and bite down upon it with your molar teeth.**" So this is a command of the Messenger of Allaah (*salallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*).

He (*salallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) also said:

"**And my Ummah will split up into seventy-three sects - all of them will be in the Hellfire, except one.**" They said: "Which one is it, o Messenger of Allaah?" He said: "It is that which I and my Companions are upon." And he didn't just say, "That which I am upon today." Rather, he said, "and my companions."

Therefore, it is upon us to understand and memorize this well.

In Bukhari and Muslim, on the authority of Ibn Mas'ood (*radiallaahu 'anhu*) who reported from the Messenger of Allaah (*salallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) a famous hadeeth:

**"Allaah curses the woman who trims her eyebrows and the woman who does it for her."**

So there was a woman whose name was Umm Ya'qoob who heard of this. And she used to read the Qur'an. So she came to Ibn Mas'ood and said, "O Abaa 'Abdur-

Rahman, "What is that I hear from you that Allaah curses the woman whose eyebrows are trimmed (or shaved), and the one who does it?" Ibn Mas'ood said, "And what is the matter, why wouldn't I curse someone whom the Messenger of Allaah cursed, and it is mentioned in the Book of Allaah?" When he said, "It is mentioned in the Book of Allaah," she said, "I swear by Allaah, I read all of the Qur'an, and I didn't find it. There's no verse in the Qur'an stating that Allaah or His Messenger curses the woman who trims her eyebrows and the one who does it for her." Ibn Mas'ood said, "No, it's in the Book of Allaah." She said, "It's not in the Book of Allaah. Wallaahi, I read it from front to back, I did not find it." Ibn Mas'ood said, "If you were to read it (with reflection and pondering), you would find it. Have you not read the statement of Allaah, 'azza wa Jall:

وَمَا آتَاكُمُ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ

***"...And whatsoever the Messenger (Muhammad) gives you, take it, and whatsoever he forbids you, abstain (from it)..." (Al-Hashr, ayah 7)***

She said, "Of course, this is a verse in the Qur'an - Suratul Hashr." And Ibn Mas'ood said, **"And I've heard this from the Messenger of Allaah."**

And thus do we say: following the companions, following the Salaf of this nation is something that Allaah and His Messenger (*salallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) commanded us to do. So this is from the command of Allaah and His Messenger (*salallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*).

**The sahaabah (companions) were the physical application of the Book and the Sunnah.**

And they were the scholars of this nation, and the scholars are the inheritors of the Prophets. However, because they have passed, they are called "***Salaf***" (which means they have preceded). The verb "***Salafa***" means that which has passed, and old, that which has preceded. And so they are called "***As-Salaf***," because they have preceded. And they are called "***As-Salafus Saleh***" (pious and righteous predecessors) because they were pious and righteous.

So therefore - based upon the Qur'an and the Sunnah - it is obligatory upon us to follow them. And according to your following of them, this determines how upright and steadfast you will be, and who will deserve most to be saved and delivered from the fire on the Day of Judgment.

The one who understands this, he hopes and wishes from Allaah, the Mighty and Majestic, that Allaah will give him the success to be of the followers and adherents of the Salaf.

So whoever truly understands these words, is it possible for him to dislike to be from the followers of the Prophet (salallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam) and the followers of Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman, 'Alee, and the followers of the (rest of the) Muhaajireen and the Ansaar, those whom Allaah is pleased and they are pleased with Allaah? And from them are those who were given glad tidings of Paradise, (and they are) the best of this nation.

Who is this person who would dislike this, or refuse or reject this, except for a great ignoramus who doesn't understand the meaning of following the Salaf. Some people [out of ignorance] think that as-Salaf is a group of people who are alive today (that the people who follow the Salaf follow people who are alive today).

**Also, not everybody claiming to be "Salafee" today is truly a follower - an adherent - of the Salaf.** However, they vary greatly in their levels. Of them are those who truly follow the Salaf, such as the major, prominent, well-known scholars. And others are less and less and less and so on and so forth.

**And there are some people who have a total false claim and ascription to the Salaf.** And there are some who are greatly deviant, and he claims he is following the Salaf in that deviation. Anyone can make a claim and say what he wants. [There are] those who are ignorant, violent and harsh, hasty. People vary.

For example, the statement "As-Salafiyeen" (Salafees, in English): let's compare it to the word "Muslimeen" (or Muslims). Are all the Muslims equal in their beliefs, their character, their acts of worship, in their dealings and actions? [No!] They vary a great deal.

However, that which we wish to understand that it is totally incumbent and obligatory



upon us to hold fast to the Sunnah. To hold fast to that which the Prophet and the companions were upon. To hold fast to that which the Salaf of this Ummah were upon. To believe in the 'Aqeedah that they professed. To tread their path and methodology upon which they proceeded and followed, to worship Allaah (*'Azza wa Jall*), in the manner they worshipped Allaah (*Subhanahu wa Ta'aala*), that we take and adopt their character and moral conduct and behavior.

They are our example, our Salaf. If we don't follow them, if we don't take their example, then whose example will we take? Whose guidance do we take?

Don't you know that Allaah says in His Book:

فَمَاذَا بَعْدَ الْحَقِّ إِلَّا الضَّلَالُ

*“So after the truth, what else can there be, save error (falsehood, misguidance)?” (Yunus, ayah 32)*

**Were the Messenger of Allaah (*salallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) and his companions upon the truth? There's no doubt about this; rather, this is the only option, the only answer you can give. So whoever comes after them and opposes them, he is upon misguidance and we have no doubt about this.**

**So all beliefs, all methods, all ways and paths, all schools of thought: their closeness to the truth, their closeness to the falsehood is only according to their closeness and remoteness from that which the Salaf of this nation were upon.**

Upon us is to give advice - not to reject and criticize the Salaf and Salafiyah and the obligation of following them because of the mistakes of some Salafees, or because there are some who ascribe themselves to the Salaf in falsehood and lying. If we do this, then we would be like those who look down upon Islam because of the mistakes of some Muslims.

What do we say to this person? We tell him (that) the shortcomings and deficiencies are the shortcomings and deficiencies of those mistaken Muslims - not the religion of Islam.



Thus do we say (that) the creed of the Salaf has no shortcomings. The methodology of the Salaf has no deficiency. Instead, the 'Aqeedah of the Salaf is nothing other than the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The Creed of the Salaf is **Ma'sooma** (perfect, protected from mistake). Allaah sent it down in His Book. And the Messenger of Allaah (*salallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) and the sahaabah believed in it. And the Prophet (*salallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) never approved of any falsehood.

Even if it was a small simple thing of falsehood, opposing the Sunnah, he would criticize and reject it. Any word - even a letter that a person erred in - the Prophet would refute him for it.

If a person said, "What Allaah had willed, and what you had willed," he said, "Say, **'What Allaah had willed alone.'**"

If a person - a small child - ate with his left hand, the Prophet (*salallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) said to him, "Say **Bismillaah, eat with your right hand, and eat from that which is in front of you.**"

A small young girl who said, "And amongst us is the Messenger of Allaah (*salallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*). He knows what will happen tomorrow." He (*salallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) said, "**Don't say this. None except Allaah knows what's going to happen tomorrow.**"

This is an 'Aqeedah which is Perfect and exempt from mistakes. This is a Manhaj which is Perfect and exempt from mistakes. This is a complete and perfect Religion.

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتَمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا

***"This day, I have perfected your religion for you, completed My Favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion..." (Al-Ma'idah, ayah 3)***

Work hard to the best of your ability to be Salafee, to be one who follows the Salaf, one who loves them, one who supports them, one who draws himself near to Allaah by loving them, to not oppose them to the best of your ability, do not separate yourself from them, neither generally nor specifically.

However, there is a very important point. If you are Salafee, working hard to the best of your ability to follow the Salaf, then don't talk and say this to people in a manner of praising and purifying yourself, and being proud and haughty against the people. And as if your name is recorded on the list of the people of Jannah, and everyone else is behind you and is misguided and a disbeliever. You don't know. You do deeds, and you hope that Allaah accepts your deeds.

Rather, Ahlus-Sunnah are the most knowledgeable of the people of the truth and most merciful (among the people) to the creation. And you only say, "I am Salafee," by way of informing the people. If you are asked, 'Are you Sunni or bid'i?', what would you say? Sunni.

The people are divided into two categories: Sunni and bid'i. However, people of bid'ah are many sects and groups. And the most disgusting from amongst them is the Shee'ah. So instead of the question being, 'Are you Sunni or bid'i?' the question became, 'Are you Sunni or Shee'i?'

Over the last 50-80 years, our forefathers didn't know anything from the foreigners except for the "**Ingleez**" (plural of British). So if a foreigner came, [our forefathers] would call them "**Ingleezi**" (singular of British). They would call the French "**Ingleez**," the Dutch "**Ingleez**," the Russians were "**Ingleez**." They didn't know any other foreigners except for the British. So all the foreigners took the name "**Ingleez**" (British). So they would ask, "Are you an Arab or **Ingleez**?" However, the non-Arabs: are they all British, or are there many races? You understand now?

People of bid'ah are many, but the most filthy from amongst them and those who hate the Sunnah the most are the Shee'ah. So the question became, "Are you Sunni or Shee'i?" What was the origin of the question? Are you Sunni or Bid'i?

If you ask the question, or if you said about yourself without being asked, "Al-Hamdulillaah, I am Sunni. I adopt and profess the creed ('Aqeedah) of the Sunnah. And I strive to hold fast to the Sunnah. I ask Allaah to give me death upon (the Sunnah)." This okay and permissible.

And similarly, if you ask, "Are you one who follows the Salaf or the khalaf (the latter generations)? [You say:] "I am Salafee, according to the best of my ability. I try to hold fast to that which the Salaf were upon."

But as for purifying yourself and praising yourself, saying, "***I am Salafee. I hold fast to everything the Salaf were upon in my heart and my body.***"

Where is this?

Let's say, **if the Salaf were alive today, they [might] boycott you for Allaah's sake.** So where are you and where are the Salaf?

But we're on the correct path; we tread this path and Allaah's mercy is ever vast. And we ask Allaah to accept it from us. And we are not pleased with any other path of method, even if we fall short in our character, our etiquettes, or our acts of worship. However, we don't want anything other than this path.

We love the Salaf, and we are grateful that we ascribe ourselves to them. We ask Allaah to allow us to die upon their path and methodology. And we imitate them to the best of our ability, despite our weakness, our shortcomings. According to what the person said:

*Imitate noble people even if you're not similar to them.  
For indeed, imitating noble people is success.*

We're not like them, however we try to be like them and adopt their method. Perhaps, Allaah, the Mighty and Majestic, would allow us to join them, because the Prophet (*salallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) said: ***Al-Maroo ma'a man ahab*** (The man will be with the one whom he loves).

***Al-Maroo ma'a man ahab*** (The man will be with the one whom he loves).

So if we love the Salaf and imitate them, and adopt their method (and) their 'Aqeedah, and defend them, and strive and fight hard for this, perhaps Allaah - the Mighty and Majestic - will have mercy upon us and make us to be from amongst them.

However, if we choose another (a different) path, if we follow the people of bid'ah (innovation), then [remember the Prophet's statement:] ***Al-Maroo ma'a man ahab*** (The man will be with the one whom he loves). Even if he doesn't reach their level, if he loves them, he will be resurrected with them - aoodhubillaah!

Therefore, it is upon us to have a correct understanding of Salafiyyah. If we have a

correct understanding of it, we would know – and come to realize - there is no other option for us except following their way. Whoever doesn't follow them, and opposes them and doesn't love them, then he is upon a great danger, due to the statement of the Prophet (*salallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*):

**"And my Ummah will split up into seventy-three sects - all of them will be in the Hellfire, except one." They said: "Which one is it, o Messenger of Allaah?" He said: "It is that which I and my Companions are upon."**

What is the path of salvation? It is that you be upon that which the Prophet and his companions were upon.

**According to your following of the Prophet (*salallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*) and the sahaabah, your opportunity to be saved and delivered from the fire becomes greater. And according to your distance and remoteness (of following them), then your danger of falling into the hellfire becomes greater.**

